

## ¡Xiomara presidente!

# Hondurans reject coup regime

By Martha Grevatt

On January 27, after nearly 13 years under a “narcodictatorship” responsible for thousands of assassinations, kidnappings and imprisonments, the people of Honduras will witness the inauguration of President-elect Xiomara Castro de Zelaya. She was the candidate of the Libre (Freedom and Refoundation) Party and is the spouse of former President Manuel “Mel” Zelaya — democratically elected but deposed in the U.S.-backed 2009 coup.

Xiomara Castro received close to 54% of the votes in the Nov. 28 election. The candidate of the National Party — the current President Juan Orlando Hernandez, who stole the election in 2013 and again in 2017 by way of terror and fraud — has conceded defeat.

This is an enormous victory for the Honduran resistance and testament to the courage of the people, who adopted the slogan: “They fear us because we have no



Hondurans celebrate win by Xiomara Castro, Nov. 28, election day.

fear.” The U.S.-trained and funded military police, along with ultraright paramilitaries, have created a living hell for the Honduran people, targeting women and

gender-oppressed people, the LGBTI+ community, educators, unionists, environmentalists, human rights advocates and the Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities.

In the lead-up to the 2017 election, close to 30 opposition candidates and campaign workers were assassinated, a pattern repeated in the current election cycle.

In addition to political terror and repression, the Honduran people have one of the highest rates of poverty and income inequality in the Western Hemisphere. The percentage of

Hondurans in poverty ranges from 62% to 74%, with 40% in “extreme poverty” by global standards. In a country of 10.1 million people, some 1.3 million are food insecure. Poverty has been compounded recently by COVID and two hurricanes. (Rights Action, Nov. 23)

Unions have been crushed and labor rights undermined. “There has been a growing deregulation of labor, coupled with the deepening of labor flexibilization [a threat to secure jobs and income] and insecurity. One of the most nefarious laws has undoubtedly been the Hourly Employment Law: Rights have been lost, and permanent jobs have been made precarious,” said Joel Almendares, secretary general of the United Confederation of Honduran Workers.

It’s little wonder that the people would choose a self-described “democratic socialist” over the brutal coup regime supported by wealthy oligarchs such as the Atala Zablah and Facussé family dynasties. The masses are celebrating Castro’s victory in the streets.

### Xiomara Castro promises change

Xiomara Castro, who will become the first woman president of Honduras, has promised to reverse the dire fortunes of the Honduran people. Concretely this means establishing the right to health care, food, housing and employment. With

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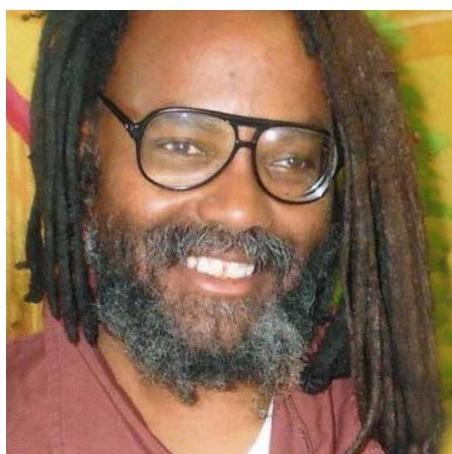
## 40 years later, we still say

# Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

Workers World Party issues this solidarity editorial on the anniversary of the imprisonment of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

### **WORKERS WORLD** editorial

December 9 marks 40 years since Black Panther Party member, activist and revolutionary journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal was framed for the murder of a Philadelphia cop. As a result of police, prosecutorial and judicial misconduct in a highly contested trial, Abu-Jamal was given the racist death sentence in July 1982. Since 1981, he has been incarcerated under inhumane and illegal imprisonment — including almost 30 years in solitary confinement on Pennsylvania’s death row.



Despite numerous appeals, in July 1995 then-Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge signed Abu-Jamal’s death warrant to be carried out on Aug. 15 — in the midst of Black August. An international

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## WWP Disability Rights and Justice Caucus

# On the right to accessibility during COVID—a statement

*This statement on the right of accessibility during the COVID pandemic was affirmed by the Disability Rights and Justice Caucus of Workers World Party and delivered by WWP DJRC member Renée Imperato at a New York City action on Dec. 3, International Day of People with Disabilities.*

The obstruction of accessibility has reached a new high in major U.S. cities.

In New York City for example, the COVID lockdown produced the following violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act, in about this order:

First there was the creation of sidewalk dining, which obstructed or severely limited navigating, especially for people with mobility constraints, such as people who use wheelchairs or crutches or canes. This has forced some disabled people to use the street and face dangerous vehicular traffic.

Then came the existence of “gutter restaurants,” which use the street curb lane to erect what amounts to small buildings. These obstruct access to street crossings and create extremely dangerous blind spots, especially when they are set right up to the crosswalk. Disabled and even able-bodied people can only be seen by motorists in an instant of time. This is incredibly

dangerous!

Next — and almost absolutely unbelievable — is that without any prior notification, streets are closed off to traffic for the ridiculous reason that restaurants have to set up tables in the middle of the street — for someone to eat a salad! And all motorized traffic — including public bus routes — must be detoured to other streets.

Imagine a wheelchair user going to the corner where they live to take a bus and they find no bus access, because the street is blocked off. Now we have to move our wheelchairs sometimes as much as a quarter mile or more to take a bus. This is an insurmountable and sometimes impossible task to navigate.

One could understand if there were a fire or gas explosion that would warrant a street closing. But to do this so some individual can eat a plate of pasta is a violation of human rights that is unacceptable.

We might add that even able-bodied workers have been late to work for these completely unacceptable and totally unnecessary obstructions. Note that these private businesses do not pay any rent to the city and are using public spaces paid for by working people.

Let's organize to stop these human rights violations! They must be stopped. □

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**WORKERS WORLD**

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Vol. 63, No. 49 • December 9, 2021  
Closing date: December 8, 2021

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Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published monthly by WW Publishers, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Phone: 212.627.2994.

Subscriptions: One year: \$36; institutions: \$50.

Letters to the editor may be condensed and edited.

Articles can be freely reprinted, with credit to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011.

Back issues and individual articles are available on microfilm and/or photocopy from NA Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 998, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-0998.

A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.

A headline digest is available via e-mail subscription. Subscription information is at workers.org.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl.

New York, N.Y. 10011.

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## Washington, D.C.

# 'Fight for reproductive justice!'

By Kathy Durkin

Rallies to support reproductive justice and the right to abortion were held in several cities in the U.S. on Dec. 1. Monica Simpson, Executive Director of SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective, gave a rousing talk at the rally in Washington, D.C., to cheers. Below are excerpts from her talk. (Access video at [tinyurl.com/2p95vwch](http://tinyurl.com/2p95vwch).)

We must fight for justice! For freedom! We send love to the Abortion Freedom Fighters in Mississippi today. We're here because of their giving for their community. We applaud every storyteller today; their bravery is powerful and revolutionary.

This fight for abortion justice is a fight against white supremacy. There is nothing more "American" than Black folks and folks of color having to fight to survive in this damned country. These laws impact our communities, Black folks, Indigenous folks, folks of color, in such a detrimental way. We must move our leadership to the front now to ensure that our communities, voices and experiences are heard and seen. We must continue this every day until liberation is ours.

Our bodily autonomy is central to our liberation. If our freedom to make decisions about our own health and bodies are denied, we as a people are not fully



PHOTO: SHERO MISSISSIPPI FB

**This Dec. 1 rally was held near the Jackson Women's Health Organization, the only remaining clinic in Mississippi that provides abortions and the respondent in the case currently before the U.S. Supreme Court.**

liberated. I want to see liberation in my lifetime. Reproductive Justice has taught me that it is our human right to have children in the ways we want, to prevent or end pregnancies without shame and in dignity, to parent our children in healthy and safe environments, to have the bodily autonomy that is ours. That is liberation.

#### White supremacy underlies abortion bans

Anti-abortion laws are not "pro-life." I want to snatch that word from these people holding onto "pro-life." They are not pro-life. They are rooted in white supremacy and are downright unjust. States that implement and uphold inherently unjust laws that disproportionately target Black folks and folks of color are upholding a

system that shields white supremacy.

Some lawmakers in Mississippi and other states argue that states should be able to decide. States' rights in the South is a longstanding argument upheld by white supremacists. They haven't come up with anything new. They keep writing the same game expecting the same results. But we are here today to give them different results!

Courts that codify unjust laws that disproportionately target us are in a system that we no longer give any credit to. That is going to end today, because we are going to continue to do what we need to do until that is gone.

Mississippi is the third Blackest state in the country, but the lawmaking body doesn't even come close to reflecting that. Only 27% of state legislators are Black, and 17% identify as women. That's not democracy; it's patriarchal white supremacy. Representation matters. When our voices are not at the table, our rights and autonomy are on the chopping block.

#### Focus on liberation!

We show what Black-centered leadership and folks-of-color-centered leadership look like. We are focused on winning,



PHOTO: SISTER SONG  
**Monica Simpson at Dec. 1 rally, Washington, D.C.**

on liberation. We will keep taking care of each other, building our collective power, voting, holding our vision for freedom in our hearts, telling our stories and changing the narrative and the culture. That is what it will take to move from a defensive to offensive position. When we get to the offensive position, our opposition better get ready. We are not stopping once we get the ball!

When we get that ball, things are going to change. Lives will change. Then liberation is ours. We are standing on the shoulders of giants who did this before us. We are standing together collectively, building the power that will change the very nature of this country. It will take all of us connected to do that.

We must keep our joy and love at the center. They cannot take our joy, love or the things that are inherently ours. We have to use them as our power to move us to the position that we want to be in. Are you ready to win? Ready for liberation in our lifetime? Let's keep doing what we are doing. □

## Philadelphia rally defends right to abortion

On Dec. 1 as the U.S. Supreme Court was hearing arguments in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization — one of the two most consequential abortion rights case since the Roe v. Wade decision in 1973 — women, other gender-oppressed people and allies rallied at Temple University in Philadelphia.

They gave speeches emphasizing how working-class communities and Black and Brown people will be the most

affected by the criminalization of access to abortion and other health care. They staffed tables covered with literature and gave out T-shirts and flyers to the receptive students passing by.

The noontime rally was organized by Planned Parenthood Generation Action, Abortion Legal Fund and Philadelphia's Women Center.

— Photo and report by Joe Piette



## World Federation of Trade Unions Solidarity on Day of Persons with Disabilities

By the World Federation of Trade Unions

This statement was issued Dec. 2 by the World Federation of Trade Unions, representing over 105 million workers internationally.

Today more than 1 billion people, or approximately 15% of the world's population, live with some form of disability, while 80% of them live in developing countries. We can all understand how difficult life for those persons and their families is, since in most cases they cannot find a job, or in heavy cases they cannot even take care of themselves.

In developing countries, 80% to 90% of persons with disabilities of working age are unemployed; whereas in industrialized countries the figure is between 50% and 70%. Also, globally, a large percentage of those persons are disabled because of an accident, injury or illness at work.

As far as children are concerned,



around 240 million disabled children around the world are 50% more likely to have never attended school than children without disabilities.

The COVID-19 pandemic further affected the lives of people with special needs. A high number of COVID-19 deaths among disabled people was reported in several countries. In many cases, they had their treatment canceled or delayed.

The United Nations claims to make efforts to promote the rights and well-being of the people with special needs. However, their situation remains difficult due to lack of strong public health systems to cover all their health needs with proper medical attendance, lack of adequate public special schools and rehabilitation centers for the education and inclusion of people with special needs, lack of adequate funding for all their needs, lack of public and free accommodation centers for the heavily disabled and chronically ill, lack of sufficient health and safety measures at workplaces.

The above could and should be priorities of all States and governments, in order to protect the health and life of the most vulnerable ones.

However, in the prevailing system of exploitation, the above are a cost that does not find a place in the States' budget. Instead, the idea of individual responsibility of disabled persons and

their families to take care of their needs is being systematically promoted so that governments can get rid of their own responsibilities. And in such societies indifference and discriminations against people with special needs keep existing and even flare up.

The World Federation of Trade Unions calls on workers all over the world to strengthen our struggle for the protection and improvement of living conditions of persons with disabilities.

We reiterate our militant demands: prevention of the disabilities; access to free, public and high quality health and rehabilitation services for people with disabilities; their access to education; creation of public and adequate accommodation centers; creation of the necessary infrastructure for their movement and transportation; employment for all persons with disabilities who are able to work; and assurance of a dignified life. □

# Rank-and-file democracy wins in the UAW

By Martha Grevatt

From Oct. 19 through Nov. 29, working and retired members of the United Auto Workers participated in a referendum vote on how they would elect their union's International Executive Board officers. The two choices were whether to continue the current delegate voting system, where the IEB is chosen by delegates to a quadrennial Constitutional Convention, or for the rank and file to elect their top officers directly in a system popularly known as "one member, one vote."

Members learned the results Dec. 2: One member, one vote won by a nearly two-to-one margin.

This was a huge victory for progressive reform forces inside the UAW. Activists have been pushing for direct elections for decades, only to be thwarted by convention processes manipulated by the Administrative Caucus, which has dominated the UAW for seven decades. The mail ballot vote was mandated by a consent decree, which followed a federal investigation of union corruption.

Direct elections carried all of the UAW's eight regions and the vast majority of locals with support in all sectors, including automotive, agricultural equipment, academic, legal services, the public sector and gaming.

The rank-and-file caucus United All Workers for

Democracy built a broad, grassroots campaign to promote voter turnout for direct elections. A team of volunteers helped with phone banking, text banking, leafletting, social media outreach and generating media publicity. It became clear that they had tapped into a widespread sentiment in their union.

"The membership of our great union has made clear that they want to change the direction of the UAW and return to our glory days of fighting for our members. I am so proud of the UAW membership and their willingness to step up and vote for change," said Chris Budnick, member of UAW Local 862, Ford Louisville Plant, and Recording Secretary for UAWD. (uawd.org)

The vote is a step forward, but the work is far from finished. Good fighting leaders have to be drafted to run for the IEB, and the rank-and-file movement needs a program and a strategy for the convention and beyond. Those discussions have already begun in the UAW's ranks.

## No business unionism as usual

The vote shows that the rank and file favor a more democratic election process, but it was also a vote against what's often termed "business unionism." For too long,



Columbia University graduate students, members of UAW Local 2110, are on strike for a first contract. Strike rally, Nov. 3.

members have been fed a message that concessions are necessary to keep a company "competitive" or "profitable." This has meant that wages have fallen behind inflation, and it has led to the expansion of unequal, divisive two-tier and multilayer pay scales, while jobs are wiped out by plant closings, outsourcing and robotization.

Defeat for the delegate system comes after the month-long UAW strike at John Deere, begun after Deere workers rejected a contract presented to them by the union leadership, which did not adequately address their concerns. They then rejected a second, improved contract, holding out for a contract they were satisfied with. UAW members at Deere voted heavily in favor of direct elections.

The referendum results follow elections in the Teamsters, where the opposition candidate Sean O'Brien won the union presidency, overwhelmingly defeating James Hoffa Jr.'s handpicked successor.

There's a new, militant mood brewing in the ranks of organized labor — and the drive to organize among Amazon workers shows the contagion is spreading to those who don't yet have a union.

To have credibility, unions must end their cozy relationship with the capitalists — and with capitalist politicians, including the Democrats. What the working class needs is a global, classwide movement.

*Martha Grevatt is a retired executive board member of UAW Local 869.*



Columbia University, Dec. 1.

— Report and photo by Toni Arenstein

## WW COMMENTARY

### No ethical consumption under capitalism

By Olujimi Alade

There is no ethical consumption under capitalism. That truism has been burned into my mind since the moment I entered the workforce. Being a worker exposed me to many of the societal problems that capitalism creates.

I'm sure many of you are aware of the ways businesses screw over not only employees but other businesses. But a couple of weeks ago, I became aware of how capitalism enables us to screw ourselves over.

I was at Rite Aid and asked the clerk where they sold lotion. The clerk referred me to the place, but not before telling me how deleterious lotion can be for your skin. The clerk elaborated by letting me know how their doctor warned how lotion can rob your skin of moisture. They then recommended vitamin E oil, stating this is beneficial in protecting skin from harmful UV radiation. With this information, I ended up choosing vitamin E oil.

When I got home, I couldn't help but think about what the clerk told me. Out of curiosity, I googled facts about the content of over-the-counter lotions, and I was stunned about the findings.

Body lotions tend to be filled with harmful ingredients and chemicals. Many of the ones I found had ingredients I couldn't even pronounce, such as butylated hydroxyanisole, which is apparently a common food preservative, and triethanolamine. Both ingredients have been recognized as carcinogens — substances with the potential to cause cancer. ([tinyurl.com/2kky9rjn](http://tinyurl.com/2kky9rjn))

This startling discovery unveiled a very critical problem. Oftentimes the working class and poor people are forced to purchase and consume low-quality products, because big firms use cheap ingredients to shave costs. This is apparent not only in care products like body lotion but in

foods we consume. Organic foods are extremely costly, and the stores that sell them are not located within reach for a large portion of the population.

In addition to this, late-stage capitalism is making it near to impossible to raise a family with only one income. Millions of single mothers work long hours to provide for their children. It is not uncommon for working parents to spend 12- or even 14-hour shifts on the job, with few to no breaks and often a paltry slot of time for lunch.

Workers forced into these shifts are left tired and weak, unable even to hold their children when they come home, let alone prepare a nutritious meal for them. Working-class families are forced to fill their shopping carts with products stuffed with unhealthy preservatives and additives. Nitrites commonly found in lunch meats that parents include in school lunch bags are common carcinogens. ([tinyurl.com/2kky9rjn](http://tinyurl.com/2kky9rjn)) Additives like high fructose corn syrup, a ubiquitous ingredient in many juices that children sip, often lead to type 2 diabetes.

The harm to the working class — who carry long shifts on the jobs and often live in food deserts — is inflicted not only on parents but also on the children. This is shown in the high rates of diabetes, hypertension and heart failure in all ages of people in low-income communities.

#### Students consuming competition

This damage to working and poor people is emblematic of the depths corporations are willing to sink to earn a buck. But the hurt extends beyond parents at jobs and their young children to older students at educational institutions.

Just as workers are logging more and more hours, college and graduate students are spending more and more

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### Baseball players union blasts owners for lockout

*At midnight Dec. 2, immediately after the contract between Major League Baseball and the Major League Baseball Players Association expired, team owners locked out all members of the MLBPA. The union issued the following statement on Twitter 20 minutes after the lockout was imposed. In two days the statement received almost 13,000 likes.*

Major League Baseball has announced a lockout of Players, shutting down our industry.

This shutdown is a dramatic measure, regardless of the timing. It is not required by law or for any other reason. It was the owners' choice, plain and simple, specifically calculated to pressure Players into relinquishing rights and benefits and abandoning good, fair-bargaining proposals that will benefit not just Players, but the game and industry as a whole.

These tactics are not new. We have been here before, and Players have risen to the occasion time and again — guided by a solidarity that has been forged over generations. We will do so again here.

We remain determined to return to the field under terms of a negotiated collective bargaining agreement that is fair to all parties and provides fans with the best version of the game we all love. □



Major League Baseball Players Association Executive Director Tony Clark explains issues dividing the union and the owners.

# U.S. caravan brings solidarity to Cuba

By Peter Gilbert

Gilbert was a member of the 31st IFCO/Pastors for Peace Caravan which recently traveled in Cuba.

The Pastors for Peace Caravan visited Cuba Nov. 15-26 as witness to the artificial hardships created there by the ongoing, indefensible U.S. blockade of the island. The contingent also witnessed the Cuban peoples' resiliency and ability to face these challenges.

Members of several socialist organizations, including Workers World Party, traveled with the Caravan, along with members of Black Workers for Justice and representatives from the Southern Workers Assembly. We delivered needed medical supplies along with solidarity and witness.

## U.S. tries to provoke crisis

The Caravan arrived Nov. 15 — the day that a U.S.-backed counterrevolutionary movement called for protests against the Cuban government. Despite lies in the imperialist media that Cuba had "flood[ed] the streets with security forces," the caravanistas saw no signs of police repression as we moved freely through Havana. ([tinyurl.com/y854ynwn](http://tinyurl.com/y854ynwn))

We witnessed one small gathering of a few dozen people in a square off the Malecon, the main roadway along Havana's waterfront. These were identified by our taxi driver as a "protest of people who want Cuba to be more like the United States." But there was no sign of any police there.

As Carlos Fernández de Cossio, General Director for the General Division of the United States in the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explained to the delegation, "The U.S. bet, once the pandemic hit, that the pandemic was going to be an ally in putting greater pressure on Cuba." This was on top of 243 increased restrictive economic measures added by the Trump administration to the ongoing U.S. blockade of Cuba.

De Cossio noted, "The current government of the U.S. got on that train," despite Biden's campaign promises to loosen the blockade, "and again they bet on this

provoking Cuba and making this situation impossible to handle by the government, by making life difficult for the common Cuban, by depressing the standard of living, by making people desperate — that this would provoke a level of dissatisfaction that would lead to mass demonstrations, and if possible, insurrection."

## Cuba's response to the crisis

The triple hardships of the increased U.S. coercive measures, the pandemic and the complete loss of tourism have created hardship and scarcity in Cuba not seen since the "Special Period," following the collapse of the Soviet Union. But this has not weakened the Cuban people's commitment to their revolutionary process.

Nowhere is this more evident than in their development of their own vaccines for COVID-19 and their ability to quickly vaccinate their entire population. Thanks to the development of these vaccines, Soberana and Abdala, more than 90% of the population, down to 2 years old, have received at least one dose of a vaccine. Over 80% have had all three doses.

This puts Cuba ninth in the world in the percentage of its population who are vaccinated, according to President Miguel Díaz-Canel, who met with the Caravan Nov. 22.

Cuba expects to be able to fully vaccinate its population by the end of November 2021. ([tinyurl.com/22jnjh99](http://tinyurl.com/22jnjh99))

## No miracle! It's socialist planning

The ability of Cuba to develop its own vaccine and to quickly vaccinate its population seems miraculous to someone accustomed only to capitalist health care delivery in the United States.



PHOTO: CINDY ANDRADE-JOHNSON

**Ricardo Perez (center), head of International Relations for the Finlay Vaccine Institute (Instituto Finlay de Vacunas), meets with members of the Workers World Party contingent (from left to right) Chris Hollis, Peter Gilbert, Loan Tran and Elena Everett, in Havana, Nov. 16.**

That a developing island nation of only 11 million people could accomplish what only large, advanced nations like the U.S. and China have done in developing a vaccine is not miraculous but a testament to socialist planning — and the foresight of Fidel Castro Ruz in encouraging the development of the state biotech industry 30 years ago.

Caravanistas met with the predominantly women researchers at the Finley Institute, where the Soberana vaccines were developed. They talked about being separated from their families and young children for a year and a half, so that they could continue the important work of collaboratively developing the vaccines without endangering their families.

They reported that there is no resistance in Cuba to being vaccinated, such as there is in the U.S., due to the complete trust Cubans have in their health care system. This trust allowed Cuba to quickly vaccinate its population — and to reopen schools, society and travel for tourism on Nov. 15, the day the Caravan arrived.

Cuba is also providing vaccines to Venezuela, Vietnam, Iran and Nicaragua, consistent with the country's revolutionary history of medical internationalism.

Comrades in the delegation presented copies of "Capitalism on a Ventilator" to the researchers at the institute and to President Diaz Canal.

'Capitalism on a Ventilator,' which details the failure of capitalism during this world health crisis, is an anthology of social justice activists discussing a global choice: cooperation vs. competition, and is available at [tinyurl.com/yk95crdk](http://tinyurl.com/yk95crdk). The book is a joint project of the International Action Center and China-U.S. Solidarity Network.

## International Day of People with Disabilities

# NYC protest demands full access, equal rights

By Edward Yudelovich  
New York City

The worldwide struggle by people with disabilities for equal rights led the United Nations to establish the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on Dec. 3, 1992. The IDPD website stresses that this holiday in 2021 should be used to recognize that people with disabilities are amongst the most affected populations amid the COVID pandemic. ([idpwd.org/](http://idpwd.org/))

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted by the U.N. in 2006. Some 177 countries have ratified it — but not the United States, which has also failed to ratify human rights treaties defending women, children, migrant workers, and Indigenous peoples.

The CRPD — unlike the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) — does not include any specific or limited definition of disability or require medical proof. It mandates for disability community advances in human, social and economic development and the abolition of poverty. The CRPD makes the entire state apparatus, and not just the individual employer or landlord, responsible for providing access. The language of the CRPD affirms the right of all people with disabilities to live in the community and have sufficient support to guarantee such independence.

In New York City, the Peoples Power Assemblies organized their sixth consecutive annual protest for IDPD on Dec. 3. Activists greeted Penn Station rush hour commuters both outside and inside the huge transportation terminal, raising the demands: "Full access, full service, no cops, no fares!" Previous PPA protests on this day had greeted holiday shoppers in Macy's department store, as well as pedestrians and subway riders at an inaccessible subway station on East 23rd Street.

A PPA flyer handed out by participants advocated that the city's budget for police officers be spent building elevators and making every subway station accessible for all New Yorkers. PPA was joined by disabled activists and allies from Disabled in Action, the Disability Justice and Rights



This protest was held inside Macy's department store, New York City, on International Day of People with Disabilities, Dec. 3, 2019.

Caucus of Workers World Party and other groups.

The rally was chaired by PPA leader Terrea Mitchell who told folks that as many as half of people killed by cops have a disability.

WWP member Renée Imperato related her testimony given earlier that day at the monthly community meeting of the NYC Mayor's Office of People

with Disabilities. There she had read from the WWP-DJRC statement: "The right of accessibility during the COVID pandemic." (Full statement available at [workers.org](http://workers.org).)

Attending the rally was Michael Howard, who identifies

as an African American male with a mild intellectual developmental disability and lives independently in Queens under Well Life Network. An active participant in Disabled in Action, ADAPT and other disability groups, he related to the Penn Station crowd that he saw friends present from the DJRC 2nd Sunday Dialogue virtual meetings. He commented on the need to stop the big wealthy corporations' attacks on poor and working-class people, and said the system is designed to fail folks with disabilities.

Readers can meet and connect to Mike, other organizers and members of the Disability Justice and Rights Caucus of Workers World Party at the next 2nd Sunday Dialogue, Dec. 12, 6 p.m. EST. Link and call numbers are available from [djrcwwp@workers.org](mailto:djrcwwp@workers.org).

Yudelovich is a WWP-DJRC activist with neurodivergent and auditory disabilities.

## No ethical consumption under capitalism

Continued from page 4

time studying and working to survive their studies and to support themselves.

As capitalist propaganda continues to push higher education as the ultimate ticket out of poverty and into a life that supposedly typifies the "American dream," students across the U.S. and all over the world pile on a plethora of "honors" and advanced placement courses. They subject themselves to a laundry list of extracurricular activities, which they often don't enjoy, in the hopes of getting even a sniff of the hallowed air of the Ivy League.

A toxic, hypercompetitive environment creates a need for an edge. For many workers and students, this edge comes in the form of energy drinks. Energy drinks like Monster and Rockstar claim to provide a boost that Coke, Pepsi or even coffee can't provide.

When I was in college, I recall the dozens of restless nights studying for exams and typing papers, fueled by cans of energy drinks. For the bold who want an even



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Olujimi Alade, Philadelphia, May 1.

bigger boost, a market has been developed for caffeine pills.

But as it turns out, the cans of Monsters that millions of us rely on can prove hazardous to our health as well.

Caffeine consumed in high qualities can lead to an increased chance of having a hemorrhage or a stroke. This information is unfortunately not doing much to stymie the rapid increase in energy drink sales, which even in 2016 almost hit \$3 billion. ([tinyurl.com/2p83ja7d](http://tinyurl.com/2p83ja7d))

My little run to Rite Aid that evening ended up driving home a necessary point: As late-stage capitalism rages on, the working class faces a war not just with the ruling class but with themselves, as they struggle to live a healthy life while managing to stay afloat.

There is no ethical consumption under capitalism. It is time for awareness to be raised about the harm this parasitic system does not just to the workers' bottom line, not just to the workers' environment but to the workers ourselves. □

# No compassion, no release in California prisons

By Judy Greenspan  
Oakland, Calif.

Dec. 5 — The California prison system continues to outdo itself in reckless and inhumane treatment of incarcerated people.

COVID rates are spiking again in the state's prisons, due to continued policies of mass incarceration. A recent court decision has severely gutted the state's medical parole process. Now it is only prisoners on ventilators — those who are almost at death's door — who can be released to nursing homes!

California has a long, sordid history of fueling the growth of the Prison Industrial

Complex in this country, which was accelerated during the 1970s by the infamous U.S. government war on poor people who use drugs. California's prison system has been a hideous example of a criminal system bent on incarcerating greater and greater numbers of Black, Latinx, Indigenous and poor white people.

When the pandemic began, prison infection rates soared due to reckless transfers of incarcerated workers. San Quentin State Prison had an infection rate of two-thirds of the people locked up there. A state judge was forced to order that the prison population at San Quentin be cut in half.

Calls for the mass release of prisoners came from prisoner support and



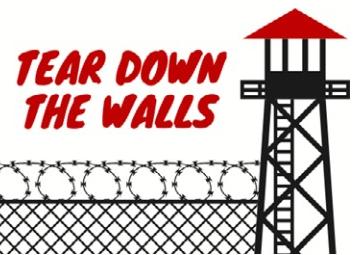
Protesters gather at the gate of Soledad State Prison in July 2020 to protest cell extractions that led to a COVID outbreak and deaths.

WW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN

prison abolition groups like No Justice Under Capitalism, Critical Resistance and the Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party. Gov. Gavin Newsom, no friend of the incarcerated population, was forced to order some releases. But COVID spread rampantly through the prisons and many prisoners died inside.

As of Sept. 21, according to the California Department of Corrections, 243 prisoners have died of COVID behind the walls. ([tinyurl.com/4afx2rn8](http://tinyurl.com/4afx2rn8))

Since the beginning of November, COVID cases and deaths have started spiking again in the state's prisons. COVID infections keep increasing despite incarcerated workers in California state prisons having high vaccination rates.



Unfortunately, the vaccination rate of prison guards has lagged behind.

There are now COVID outbreaks in several prisons, including the Central California Women's Facility, where 81% of prisoners are vaccinated compared to only 65% of the guards. Chuckawalla Valley State Prison, the California Medical Facility at Vacaville and the California Correctional Center experienced new outbreaks in mid-November. (The Davis Vanguard, Nov. 16)

In 2014, the state prison system began a medical parole program, which allowed the release of 210 severely incapacitated and disabled prisoners to nursing homes. □

## Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper  
Edited by Monica Moorehead

### Racism, National Oppression & Self-Determination

Larry Holmes • **Black Labor from Chattel Slavery to**

**Wage Slavery** Sam Marcy • **Black Youth: Repression &**

**Resistance** LeiLani Dowell • **The Struggle for Socialism**

**Is Key** Monica Moorehead • **Black Reconstruction: The**

**unfinished revolution** Minnie Bruce Pratt • **Black &**

**Brown Unity: A Pillar of Struggle for Human Rights &**

**Global Justice!** Saladin Muhammad • **Harriet Tubman,**

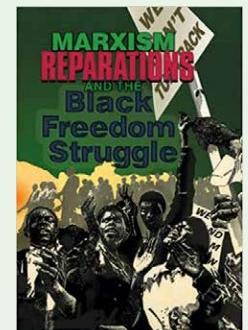
**Woman Warrior** Mumia Abu-Jamal • **The U.S. role in Darfur**

**Sudan** Sara Flounders • **Haiti Needs Reparations, Not**

**Sanctions** Pat Chin • **Alabama's Black Belt: Legacy of Slavery, Sharecropping &**

**Segregation** Consuela Lee • **Hurricane Katrina: 'Like a bomb was dropped in the**

**region'** Teresa Gutierrez • **The May Day uprising of 2006** Larry Holmes



COVER GRAPHIC: SAHU BARRON

Available at [workers.org/books](http://workers.org/books) and major online booksellers.

# 'Prison is no joke'

By Che Nieves

The following is Part 1 of an edited transcript of a Nov. 22 video talk given by Che Nieves, a member of the Young Lords and a survivor of the Attica Prison Rebellion in 1971.

Greetings to all who believe in humanity, who believe in the self-determination of poor and oppressed people throughout the world.

My name is Che. I was given that name many years ago by some righteous brothers who saw my resisting spirit as I struggled within the prison system. I became a freedom fighter at the awakening of my revolutionary consciousness. It was at this point that I began fighting against racism, exploitation, injustices, abuses and, of course, against capitalism.

We have seen and witnessed throughout history firsthand the outcome of this

horrible system. Capitalism for the last 200 years has been a failure to human development. This is a system where our labor is exploited. And the system utilizes our labor, efforts and sweat to gain more wealth and become richer. This results in a process that creates two classes in societies: one, the superrich, which are the capitalists; and two, the superpoor, which are poor and oppressed people of the world, [who] are working-class people.

Between these two classes develops a problem of interests. This conflict of interests creates a contradiction. And this contradiction can only be resolved by a massive, well-organized working class, which takes control over all the major means of production in society and puts it to use for the benefit of the working class. This is a new system of development that we call scientific socialism. This is a historical reality that cannot be stopped. We do not create this process or system. It is

a process throughout history that brings about development.

In 1969, after so many years of constant harassment and abuses by prison guards — I was a member of the Black Panther Party at that time — in Attica, we were able to form the first chapter of the Young Lords Party within the United States prison system.

### Freedom fighters inside prison

I became a leading member of that party. We began organizing to make this Young Lords Party chapter a reality. In the process of time, the system took notice of the situation in the yard and started targeting the leaders. Of course I was one of them.

We were placed in segregation. This is a place where you are totally isolated from the prison population. This is a place where they torture and kill you without a slight hesitation. This is a place they have the advantage over you, because now you cannot scream for help because nobody hears you.

They [the guards] go to your cell in numbers, six or seven or more. They put a whipping on you. A hell of a whipping. Many times I was subjected to that. Many brothers were subjected to those types of atrocities. Some of them were killed. Literally, killed.

That's what happens when you are sent to this place. We are sent there with the

expectation of dehumanizing us and forcing us to change our political views and our political activities in the yard.

We're freedom fighters. We ain't goin' with that.

So as a result, we refused to change. And they would continue torturing us.

Many brothers remain in this place for months and even years. We were also denied — on many occasions, for a few days — food, and we were denied show-

ers. These are basic rights that we should have, regardless of our circumstances. But we don't have those rights, because prisoners are not considered humans. We need to understand that: Prisoners are not considered humans.

It's worth it. It's worth risking your life, because we love our people. We will give our lives for our people. That's what struggle's about.

But they in turn will not hesitate to kill us just to prove a point. Killing a human life, just like that, so quickly, just to prove a point. So when you become a freedom fighter in prison, you're putting your life at risk. And it's worth it, because we know that in the long run our people are gonna win. We know that in the long run, the people are going to become the vanguard of the struggle. We believe in our people. We love our people. And we will do anything for our people. □



## With worsening cancer

# Mutulu Shakur remains behind bars

By Natasha Lennard

*This edited article first appeared in its entirety on The Intercept at [tinyurl.com/yckz4kv](http://tinyurl.com/yckz4kv) on Dec. 2. A petition campaign for President Joe Biden to grant Presidential clemency to Dr. Mutulu Shakur is online at [tinyurl.com/2p86sh44](http://tinyurl.com/2p86sh44). For more on Dr. Shakur's case, go to [mutulushakur.com/](http://mutulushakur.com/).*

Mutulu Shakur was not sentenced to die in prison, but he may die in prison. The 71-year-old icon of Black liberation struggle has been incarcerated for over three decades. The rules governing his 1988 sentencing set his presumed release date for 2016. Yet despite an impeccable institutional record, he has been denied release by the federal parole commission nine times. He remains behind bars, while an incurable cancer is now spreading through his bone marrow.

Reforms and policy shifts in certain state parole systems, including New York's, have seen the long overdue release of a number of aging former Black Panthers like Herman Bell and Jalil Muntaqim in recent years. Held in the federal system, however, longtime prisoners like Shakur face further layers of institutional intransigence and procedural arcana.

Shakur, the stepfather of the late rapper Tupac Shakur, was convicted of racketeering conspiracy charges alongside a number of Black liberationists and leftist allies for his involvement in the 1981 robbery of a Brinks armored truck, during which a guard and two police officers were killed. He was also convicted for aiding in the prison escape of Assata Shakur.

A member of the Black nationalist organization Republic of New Afrika, who worked closely with Black Panther Party members and New Left activists, Shakur was at the forefront of liberatory struggle. As a renowned acupuncturist, he was a central figure in the movement to bring holistic health care and self-determination to Black residents in the Bronx in the 1970s, blighted as the New York City borough was by police violence, poverty and heroin addiction. That landed Shakur in the crosshairs of the federal government's malicious COINTELPRO campaign to decimate racial and social justice movements.

Yet the demand for his release now has nothing to do with the political underpinnings of his arrest, trial and conviction. If any party is displaying ideological excesses, it is the federal justice system apparently acting against its own standards in the case of a Black liberation elder.

### Cruel and unusual punishment

"Dr. Shakur is a 71-year-old man who has been imprisoned for over 35 years, undergoing treatment for bone marrow cancer," Shakur's attorney, Brad Thomson of People's Law Office, told me. "He has been praised by current and former Bureau of Prisons staff, and BOP's own assessment tools establish that he poses absolutely no risk, should he be released."

Shakur is aging and ill. He has served his extensive prison time and has accepted full responsibility for his actions. Like other long-imprisoned Black liberation elders, including Mumia Abu-Jamal and Sundiata Acoli, the alleged grounds for Shakur's continued incarceration are without merit, even according to

the purported logics of our brutal, criminal legal system. The Department of Justice's own risk-assessment tool categorizes Shakur at the absolute lowest risk of recidivism; the rates of reoffending for people in his age group are already vanishingly small.

A top oncologist's recent medical declaration on the state of Shakur's health stated that, even with ameliorative cancer treatment, he would likely die within two to three years; in the highly possible event that treatment fails, Shakur is expected to live fewer than 11 months. His mandatory release date is in 2024, but his family, friends and supporters believe he cannot survive that long. With an accordant sense of urgency, Shakur's legal team is currently trying every available legal, statutory and bureaucratic avenue to see him released.

"Due to bureaucratic and administrative failures, arbitrary abuses of discretion and inconsistent applications of the law, Mutulu and most others in his position have been denied the relief that were designed for them," said Thomson.

### Impact of the 'old law'

Shakur was incarcerated in the federal system under a set of harsher sentencing guidelines, known as "old law," because he was convicted for crimes that took place before 1987, when the guidelines changed.

Those convicted under "old law" and eligible for parole remain beholden to a moribund body known as the U.S. Parole Commission. The commission was intended to be phased out decades ago. The new sentencing guidelines eliminated parole for defendants convicted of post-1987 federal crimes, dramatically decreasing the need for the federal commission.

The cases of fewer than 200 people sentenced under "old law" and eligible for parole — all of whom are aging, and many of whom, like Shakur, are infirm — remain under the discretion of the commission. Only two federal parole commissioners make all the decisions, and they do so with a vested interest in keeping those imprisoned under "old law" inside to justify the commission's very existence.



Their stated reasons for denying Shakur parole have been no less than absurd. They said, for example, that Shakur lacked the appropriate remorse for his actions and remained a threat to the general public, because he had signed off letters to friends and supporters with the phrase "stiff resistance" — the very resistance to injustice that has made Shakur a trusted mentor to dozens of formerly incarcerated men.

Steven Hinshaw, one of the numerous men who found a mentor in Shakur while imprisoned alongside him, told me how Shakur was unique in his ability to break through the extreme race-based



PHOTO: LEE LEW  
Mutulu Shakur at ADX Florence (Administrative Maximum Facility), in Fremont County, Colorado, in the 1990s.

**A member of the Black nationalist organization Republic of New Afrika, who worked closely with Black Panther Party members and New Left activists, Shakur was at the forefront of liberatory struggle. Sign petition to grant Presidential clemency to Dr. Shakur at [tinyurl.com/2p86sh44](http://tinyurl.com/2p86sh44).**

gang segregation encouraged in federal prisons. Hinshaw, who is white and has mixed-race children, now works as a truck driver and owes his determination to Shakur's inspiration. "Anyone who has been in the yard with him knows that he solves problems and builds bridges," Hinshaw told me. "He has a gift for helping people see themselves."

The commissioners also cited an alleged "serious" violation: He was put on loudspeaker during a call with a professor and her class in 2013. It's not clear why this constituted a violation, let alone a serious one. That the subject of the class was Shakur's support for the founding of a truth and reconciliation commission in the United States — to reckon, through peaceful conflict resolution, with histories of racism — made for a grim irony.

A letter signed by numerous civil rights organizations urging President Joe Biden to grant "corrective clemency" to "old law" federal prisoners described the U.S. Parole Commission as "an abusive and insurmountable barrier to any hope of due process or release."

### Barriers to freedom

"Old law" prisoners like Dr. Shakur have essentially fallen through the cracks," Shakur's attorney, Thomson, told me. "Due to administrative failures, the laws establishing how and when 'old law' prisoners should be released are not being followed, and there is almost no accountability for these failures. Meanwhile, many new reforms are not being retroactively applied to prisoners sentenced under the 'old law.'"

An antiquated parole commission has not been Shakur's only barrier to freedom.

Alongside his numerous parole denials, an application for Shakur's compassionate release was rejected by a judge last year. At the time, the judge noted that Shakur had "tolerated chemotherapy with no adverse effects," but his body was nonetheless ailing: hypertension, type 2 diabetes, glaucoma and the aftereffects of a 2013 stroke, not to mention the high risk of contracting COVID-19 in prison. Studies have found

that longtime incarceration ages a person by a decade. Shakur did indeed contract COVID-19 last year, from which he recovered. His cancer, though, once in remission, has returned.

The judge who denied Shakur's compassionate release in effect told the aging prisoner to reapply only when he was at death's door. These were the conditions, after all, under which Shakur's codefendant Marilyn Buck, who was convicted on the same charges, was released on July 15, 2010. She died of uterine cancer on August 3 that year.

"Should it develop that Shakur's condition deteriorates further, to the point of approaching death, he may apply again to the Court, for a release that in those circumstances could be justified as 'compassionate,'" wrote Judge Charles Haight Jr. in his decision.

Haight was no impartial arbiter: Thanks to the vagaries of the federal system, the judge tasked with ruling over Shakur's compassionate release request was the very same judge who sentenced him to prison over three decades ago. Haight was 90 years old when he last ruled against Shakur's release.

Following the return of Shakur's cancer, his legal team has again applied for compassionate release, but they are not relying on this single avenue for his freedom.

Shakur's attorneys and several legal scholars believe that he could be freed without relying on the unbounded discretion of the parole commission or the judge. He should, they argue, be released immediately, based on no more than the correct calculation of so-called good-time credit to reduce time served.

Shakur is an "old law" prisoner but has not been credited with the appropriate "good time" days as required by "old law" rules. According to his legal team, Shakur has been denied a staggering 976 days of earned good time, which he is owed. Once properly accorded to him, he would be eligible for immediate release. Shakur is in an administrative remedy process to get this time restored. □

## Youth leader at National Day of Mourning

# 'We are not vanishing'

By Kimimilasha James

The following is a slightly edited talk given by Kimimilasha James on Nov. 25 at the 52nd commemoration of the National Day of Mourning on Cole's Hill, in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Once again on the fourth Thursday in November, United American Indians of New England and our supporters are gathered on this hill to observe a National Day of Mourning for Indigenous people murdered by settler colonialism and imperialism worldwide. Today marks the 52nd time we have gathered here to mourn our ancestors, confront settler mythologies and speak truth to power.

When 200 Native people and their allies gathered in this exact spot 51 years ago to observe the first National Day of Mourning, they could not have foreseen that generations would continue to gather here, year after year, carrying on this tradition. Many of the elders who stood on this hill and organized that first National Day of Mourning are no longer with us, but we feel their spirits guiding us today.

Today we mourn the loss of Aquinnah Wampanoag elder and UAINE co-leader Moonanum James, who joined the ancestors in December of last year, and Wampanoag elder Bert Waters, who entered the spirit world in August of this year. We are also thinking today of so many others, especially those we have lost during the ongoing pandemic. We mourn their loss.

Today, I want to tell you the story of the National Day of Mourning, which was founded by my grandfather, Wamsutta Frank James, an Aquinnah Wampanoag tribal member, more than 50 years ago in 1970. He had been invited by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to speak at a banquet celebrating the 350th anniversary of the arrival of the Pilgrims.

The organizers of the banquet no doubt imagined that Wamsutta would give an appreciative and complimentary speech, singing the praises of the American settler-colonial project and thanking the Pilgrims for bringing "civilization" to these shores. However, the speech that Wamsutta wrote, which was based on historical fact, was a far cry from complimentary.

### 'Our spirit refuses to die'

Wamsutta's speech not only named some of the atrocities committed by the settlers and reflected on the treatment of the Wampanoag at the hands of the Pilgrims but also contained a powerful message of Native pride. "Our spirit refuses to die," he wrote. "Yesterday we walked the woodland paths and sandy trails. Today we must walk the macadam highways and roads. We are uniting. ... We stand tall and proud; and before too many moons pass, we'll right the wrongs we have allowed to happen to us."

When state officials saw an advance copy of Wamsutta's speech, they refused to allow him to deliver it, saying that the speech was too "inflammatory." They told him he could speak, only if he were willing to offer false praise of the Pilgrims. The organizers even offered to write a speech for him, one which would better fit with their settler-colonialist narrative.

But Wamsutta refused to have words put into his mouth. His suppressed speech was printed in newspapers across the country, and he and other local Native activists began to plan a protest. The flyer for this protest, which was circulated among Native people nationwide, read: "What do we have



At the mic is Kimimilasha James speaking at the National Day of Mourning rally, Nov. 25.

WW PHOTO: RACHEL JONES

to be thankful for? The United American Indians of New England have declared Thanksgiving Day to be a National Day of Mourning for Native Americans."

### 1970: First National Day of Mourning

On so-called "Thanksgiving" Day 1970, Wamsutta and members of at least 25 tribes, as well as a sprinkling of non-Native allies, gathered here on this hill and observed the first National Day of Mourning. That first year, my grandfather never got a chance to deliver his suppressed speech, although some who don't actually know our history say he did.

Up to 200 Native people and their allies gathered on that day. Indigenous people from this region and members of the Boston Indian Council organized and were joined by others, including some famous members of the American Indian Movement. They spoke out about the Pilgrim invasion and conditions in Indian Country, marched around Plymouth, boarded the Mayflower II and threw the English flag overboard. They even buried Plymouth Rock!

One AIM leader would later say of the first National Day of Mourning: "It is a day American Indians won't forget. We went to Plymouth for a purpose: to mourn since the landing of the Pilgrims the repression of the American Indian; and to indict the hypocrisy of a system which glorifies that repression. We fulfilled that purpose and gained a spirit of unity that spread across the land."

National Day of Mourning continued across the years. In the 1970s, UAINE demanded the return of the bones of a Wampanoag girl that were being held by the gravedigger settlers at the Pilgrim Hall Museum. At the fourth National Day of Mourning, my grandfather marched into the Pilgrim Hall Museum and took the bones back, so that they could receive a proper burial.

Over the years we repeatedly disrupted the Pilgrim Progress parade, a tradition we continued until 1996. The following year, in 1997, we were blocked on Leyden Street, brutalized by police and arrested without

warning for simply trying to march peacefully. The resulting court case and settlement led to the National Day of Mourning plaque you see here on Cole's Hill and the Metacomet plaque we will visit when we march.

Consistently, our organization has never collaborated with the Pilgrims or their institutions, whether the Mayflower Society, the Plymouth 400 international colonizer celebrations or the disgusting Thanksgiving parade that took place here five days ago, which members of local tribes rightfully protested.

So why do so many Native people object to the Thanksgiving myth? According to popular myth, the Pilgrims, seeking religious freedom, landed on Plymouth Rock. The Indians welcomed them with open arms and then conveniently faded into the background, and everyone lived happily ever after. The end.

### The truth about the Pilgrims

First, the Pilgrims are glorified and mythologized, because the circumstances of the first permanent English colony in North America in Jamestown were too ugly to hold up as an effective national myth. No school seems to want to teach the kids about settler cannibalism. Pilgrims and Indians are a much more marketable story.

Second, the Pilgrims came here as part of a commercial venture. They didn't need religious freedom; they already had that back in the Netherlands. The Mayflower

*Today, I want to tell you the story of the National Day of Mourning, which was founded by my grandfather, Wamsutta Frank James, an Aquinnah Wampanoag tribal member, more than 50 years ago in 1970. He had been invited by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to speak at a banquet celebrating the 350th anniversary of the arrival of the Pilgrims. Subsequent slay-*

*ters of Indigenous people would be celebrated by a day of Thanksgiving. And yet the history books call us the savages!*

*So why does any of this matter? It is simple. When people perpetuate the myth of Thanksgiving, they are not only erasing our genocide but also celebrating it.*

### Speaking truth to power

But we did not simply fade into the background as the Thanksgiving myth says. We have survived and thrived. We have persevered. The very fact that you are here is proof that we did not vanish. Our very presence frees this land from the lies of the history books and the myth-makers. We will remember and honor all of our ancestors in the struggle who went before us. We will speak truth to power as we have been doing since the first Day of Mourning in 1970.

That first Day of Mourning was a powerful demonstration of Native unity. It has continued for all these years as a powerful demonstration of Indigenous unity and of the unity of all people who speak truth to power.

Sadly, many of the conditions that prevailed in Indian Country in 1970 still prevail today. In 1970, our average life expectancy was just 44 years. Today it

*Continued on page 9*



National Day of Mourning, Nov. 25.

Compact was merely a group of white men, who wanted to ensure they would get a return on their investment.

When the Pilgrims arrived—on Outer Cape Cod, not on that pebble down the hill—one of the first things they did was to rob Wampanoag graves at Corn Hill and steal as much of their winter provisions of corn and beans as they were able to carry. The writings of the colonists themselves describe these actions taking place.

The next part of the mythology is true: Some Wampanoag ancestors did welcome the Pilgrims and save them from starvation. And what did we get in return for this kindness? Genocide, the theft of our lands, slavery, starvation and never-ending repression.

It is also important to remember that the first official Thanksgiving did not take place in 1621 when the Pilgrims had a harvesttime meal provided largely by the Wampanoag. Instead, the first Thanksgiving was declared in 1637 by Governor [John] Winthrop of the Massachusetts Bay Colony to celebrate the massacre of over 700 Pequot men, women and children on the banks of the Mystic River in Connecticut.

William Bradford of the Plymouth colony wrote of this event: "Those that escaped the fire were slain with the sword; some hewed to pieces, others run through with their rapiers. ... they thus destroyed about 400 at this time. It was a fearful sight to see them thus frying in the fire ... horrible was the stink and scent thereof, but the victory seemed a sweet sacrifice, and they gave the prayers thereof to God, who had wrought so wonderfully for them."

Subsequent slay-

ters of Indigenous

people would be celebrated by a day of

Thanksgiving. And yet the history books

call us the savages!

# ¡Xiomara presidente! Hondurans reject coup regime

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the largest number of migrants entering the U.S. coming from Honduras, Xiomara Castro points to “the lack of employment as one of the most serious factors in the expulsion of the population.”

Xiomara Castro has pledged to overturn laws that have allowed corruption to flourish and the country to be run by what she calls a “narcodictatorship.” Tony Hernandez, brother of the current president, was extradited to the U.S. on drug trafficking charges and is serving a life sentence here. Xiomara Castro has vowed to democratize the country, calling for a Constituent Assembly to rewrite the Honduran Constitution.

The president-elect has promised protection of the rights of women and the LGBTI+ community.

Popular organizations are reminding the people of the need to maintain power in the streets. The Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) stated: “We remind social organizations and conscious citizens that a project of radical and profound change in our society necessarily



**Xiomara Castro at an election rally.**

implies continuing the struggle, dialogues and organization to dismantle the current powers that are contrary to the rights of the majority, and to exercise popular power.” The beloved leader of COPINH, Berta Cáceres, was assassinated in 2016, but the popular saying is that “she didn’t die; she multiplied.”

Miriam Miranda of the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras commented: “Xiomara can become president, but how is she going to govern when a whole platform of economic, political and military power will always be fighting against her.”

“So, whoever wins, we have to build another form of coexistence, different

pacts that allow us to move forward and to face key issues such as the climate crisis. Corporations are destroying the habitat and are looting all natural resources. So you have to build awareness on the one hand, but also take decisions about those businesses that are destroying nature to such an extent. It is a debate that is taking place around the world.” ([tinyurl.com/54u3d8rm](http://tinyurl.com/54u3d8rm))

The president-elect said in her victory speech Nov. 28, “Today I want to say from the depths of my heart, so that the Honduran people feel it: No more war! No more hate! No more death squads! No more corruption! No more drug trafficking and organized crime! No more ZEDES [“Special Economic Development Zones”]! No more poverty and misery in Honduras! Until the final victory, united, the people together, we are going to transform our country!”

*Martha Grevatt, as part of a delegation from the International Action Center, was a human rights observer during the 2013 Honduran presidential election.*

## ‘We are not vanishing’

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is up, but for Native men it is still six years below that of white people. Native women’s death rate has increased 20% over the past 15 years. In 1970, the average yearly income for Native people was \$4,347. In 2019, 20% of Native people still earned under \$5,000. In 1970, our suicide and infant mortality rates were among the highest in the country. This has not changed.

We all know that racism is alive and well. All of us are struggling under the oppression of a capitalist system which forces people to make a bitter choice between heating and eating. We will continue to gather on this hill until corporations and the U.S. military stop polluting the earth. And until we dismantle the brutal apparatus of mass incarceration.

### The struggle will continue

We will not stop until the oppression of our Two-Spirit siblings is a thing of the past. When the Freedmen are granted equal rights by the so-called “Five Civilized Tribes,” who enslaved their ancestors. When unhoused people have homes. When children are no longer taken from their parents and locked in cages.

When the Palestinians reclaim their homeland and the autonomy Israel has denied them for the past 70 years. When no person goes hungry or is left to die because they have little or no access to quality health care. When insulin is free. When union busting is a thing of the past. Until then, the struggle will continue.

In 1970 we demanded an end to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. It is still a demand today. Native nations should not need federal oversight to govern ourselves or take control of our own lands.

As we did in 1970, we mourn the loss of millions of our ancestors and the devastation of the land, water and air.

We condemn all acts of violence and terrorism perpetrated by all governments and organizations against innocent people worldwide. Since the invasion of Columbus and the rest of the Europeans, Native people have been virtually non-stop victims of terrorism. From the

colonial period to the 21st century, this has entailed torture, massacres, systematic military occupations and the forced removals of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral homelands.

Let us not forget that this country was founded on the ideology of white supremacy, the widespread practice of African slavery and a policy of genocide and land theft. Let us not forget that under the pipelines, skyscrapers, mines and the oil rigs lie the interred bones, sacred objects and villages of our Native ancestors.

On our program will be only Indigenous speakers. This is one day when we speak for ourselves, without non-Native people, so-called “experts,” intervening to interpret and speak for us.

Today on liberated territory, we will correct the history of a country that continues to glorify butchers such as Christopher Columbus, that makes slave-owning presidents such as Washington and Jefferson into god-like figures and even carves their faces into the sacred Black Hills of the Lakota.

### ‘We are as strong as ever’

In 1970 very few people would have given any thought to the fact that the Indigenous people of this hemisphere do not look upon the arrival of the European invaders as a reason to give thanks. Today, many thousands stand with us in spirit as we commemorate the 2021 National Day of Mourning.

As my grandfather said in 1970: “We are now being heard; we are now being listened to. The important point is that ... we still have the spirit; we still have the unique culture; we still have the will and, most important of all, the determination to remain as Indians. We are determined, and our presence here ... is living testimony that this is only the beginning of the American Indian, particularly the Wampanoag, to regain the position in this country that is rightfully ours.”

In the spirit of Crazy Horse, in the spirit of Metacomet, in the spirit of Geronimo. Above all, to all people who fight and struggle for real justice. We are not vanishing. We are not conquered. We are as strong as ever. □

## Philadelphia



**Philadelphia City Hall, Nov. 29.**

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

## Palestine Solidarity Day officially recognized

**By Joe Piette**

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was officially recognized in Philadelphia for the first time on Nov. 29.

Mayor Jim Kenney, Amy Eusebio (director of the Office of Immigrant Affairs), City Council members Kendra Brooks, Jamie Gauthier and Maria Quinoñes Sanchez, State Representative Danilo Burgos and State Senator Nikil Saval all gave statements of support.

Palestine Solidarity Day has been observed around the world since 1977, when the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 32/40B declaring Nov. 29 as a day to highlight solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for national sovereignty.

On Nov. 29, 1947, the U.N. General Assembly adopted the colonialist resolution on the partition of Palestine, which led to the Nakba (the Catastrophe), the destruction of Palestinian society and homeland as it existed in 1948 and the

displacement of most of the Palestinian people by the Zionist Israeli state.

Nakba is also used to describe the ongoing Israeli persecution, illegal displacement and deadly occupation of Palestine and its Indigenous inhabitants, both in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip and in Palestinian refugee camps throughout the region.

In Philadelphia many participants celebrated their solidarity later in the day at Al-Bustan Seeds of Culture’s event in front of The Soul of Black Bottom mural in West Philly, featuring the Dabke troupe, Al-Bayan.

Such acts of solidarity fly in the face of Zionist propaganda, which refuses to recognize the very existence of the Palestinian people. The participation of both progressives and mainstream-elected officials in recognizing the people of Palestine reflects the growing movement of people here and around the world to “Free Palestine!” □

**WORKERS WORLD**  
**editorial**

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movement responded, filling the streets of Philadelphia and other cities with thousands of protesters, forcing the state to back down. Workers World Party was key among organizers of that protest and many since.

The Fraternal Order of Police and their reactionary supporters have pushed for Mumia's murder since his unjust conviction, never failing to hide their white-supremacist views. As a nationally recognized Black journalist, Abu-Jamal found himself in their crosshairs when he confronted racist Philadelphia Mayor Frank Rizzo, former head of the police department, over his brutal and bigoted handling of the August 1978 confrontation

with the MOVE organization.

The FOP was dealt a major blow when — after nearly two decades of international protests — Mumia's death sentence was overturned by a federal court ruling in December 2001. After another 10 years on death row, in 2011 he was given a just as cruel, life in prison without parole sentence. But this wasn't good enough for the reactionaries. They wanted him and all other Black political prisoners to suffer and die.

The movement said: Hell no! Mumia Abu-Jamal will be free!

The struggle to free our brother has only grown stronger throughout the last 10 years. In 2016 a door opened in the legal struggle for his case to continue on appeal, based on the U.S. Supreme Court

ruling Williams v. Pennsylvania.

In December 2018 Philadelphia Common Pleas Court Judge Leon Tucker allowed Mumia's original appeals to be reheard. The status of the case, seriously disrupted in 2020 when the Pennsylvania Supreme Court agreed to hear a highly questionable FOP legal maneuver, remains in limbo.

What is crystal clear is the pressing need for the movement, determined to win Mumia's release, to continue to grow — despite every effort by the FOP, the courts and other capitalist state forces to block his liberation.

Workers World Party joins millions of voices around the globe demanding the immediate freedom of Mumia Abu-Jamal, who is 67 and suffering numerous

health problems. We continue to speak his name and fight to free him and all other political prisoners — Sundiata Acoli, Dr. Mutulu Shakur, Ruchell Magee, Leonard Peltier and so many other incarcerated elders. We say free them all! Tear down the walls!

Demonstrations in solidarity are being held Dec. 9-11, in Philadelphia, France, Germany, Mexico and elsewhere. There will be a webinar Dec. 9 to honor Mumia and discuss our struggle to free an incredible revolutionary. Register at [bit.ly/3rsz7JL](https://bit.ly/3rsz7JL)

Brick by brick,  
Wall by wall  
We're gonna free  
Mumia Abu-Jamal!

## People of the Sahel oppose imperialism

By G. Dunkel

After two weeks of struggle — burning barricades, smashed windows and mirrors, Molotov cocktails, masses of people on the road, attempts to seize the trucks — the logistics convoy that the French army had organized at the port of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), in the middle of November finally reached Gao, Mali, at the end of November.

The 1,100-mile trip took much longer to complete than usual because of "unexpected" resistance, according to Captain François Xavier, in command of the convoy. (France24 video)

An eight-minute video, filmed in western Niger, shows bands of youth smashing windows and mirrors on a military truck, masses of people blocking the road, armored personnel carriers firing a missile at a house, hundreds of protesters scattered across barren fields throwing rocks and cops from Niger firing tear gas on the crowd. Three protesters died in Niger, and a number were seriously wounded.

According to France 24 news channel, this was the 32nd convoy bound from Abidjan to Gao since the French military Operation Barkhane began in August 2014. This convoy comprised between 60 and 100 vehicles. Some of the vehicles are military; others are heavy trucks, buses and construction equipment.

The intensified hostile reception to the convoy along the way has caused the French army and the French government to question how to maintain the presence of the French army in this area in western Africa, which is part of the region known as the Sahel.

The United States, the world's leading imperialist power, has formally agreed to let France take the lead in military presence in the western Sahel. (Department of Defense press release, Oct. 21) But the U.S. is spending over a

quarter of a billion dollars on a CIA drone base currently being built in central Niger. The U.S. has placed sanctions on some of the major business leaders in Mali. But these actions have not restrained the hostile mood of the masses.

For one week of this trip, the convoy made its way with great difficulty through Burkina Faso, lying between the Côte d'Ivoire and Niger. For years after Blaise Compaoré led a coup against Thomas Sankara, Africa's Che Guevara, in 1987, Burkina was a reliable puppet "ally" of French imperialism.

The resistance to the passage of the convoy, along with the recent ongoing trial of the army officers who



PHOTO: ABIDJAN TV

**Caption:** Near Tera in western Niger, the progress of a French military convoy was blocked by demonstrators protesting against the presence of France in the Sahel.

assassinated Sankara, shows that these ties are being dramatically challenged.

The protests in Burkina Faso were organized by militants, who communicated by using the internet over mobile phones. This tactic was so effective that the Burkinabe authorities shut the mobile internet down for four days until local businesses, which rely on that communication for sales, registered protest. The Burkina Faso government tried closing schools, but that resulted in more students taking to the streets.

Besides the neocolonialist presence of the French army and its convoy, one of the main issues raised by the Burkina Faso protesters was the failure of their government to defend local communities from attacks by reactionary Islamic forces. These attacks have produced tens of thousands of internally displaced refugees.

The attacks of reactionary Islamic forces in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso have been a major propaganda point used by France and its U.S. ally to justify their military presence. A very persistent rumor among those protesting is that the convoys carry arms to some Islamist groups that the French want to support.

Though the French have been quick to deny and to discredit these allegations, political analysts who followed the U.S. war in Afghanistan remember well that the U.S. armed some reactionary Islamist groups there in order to attack and destabilize pro-socialist and left-democratic governments.

Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso are among the poorest countries in the world, landlocked, with roads that even if paved are in extremely poor condition, and with the barest minimum of internet communication systems.

But progressive forces in these three countries are currently mounting a militant struggle against imperialism. Progressive forces worldwide should be alert for ways to send meaningful solidarity. □

### WW COMMENTARY

## The case of Peng Shuai and U.S. hypocrisy

By Monica Moorehead

U.S. and Western imperialism are super-obsessed with finding any angle to demonize and smear the People's Republic of China, politically, economically and culturally. A main strategy for these anti-communist attacks on China has been accusations of so-called human rights abuses.

For example, President Joe Biden has gone on record calling for a "diplomatic boycott" of the 2022 XXIV Winter Olympics to be held Feb. 4-20 in three cities in China: Beijing, Yanqing and Zhangjiakou. He cited "human rights violations" as the reason. This boycott would mean no U.S. diplomat would attend the opening and closing ceremonies of the games, while U.S. athletes would be

allowed to compete.

When the boycott was confirmed at a Dec. 6 White House press conference, the Chinese Embassy in Washington, D.C., tweeted that politicians announcing a boycott are "doing so for their own political interests and posturing. In fact, no one would care about whether these people come or not, and it has no impact whatsoever on the #Beijing2022 to be successfully held."

China's mission to the United Nations called the boycott a "self-directed political farce. The U.S. just wants to politicize sports, create divisions and provoke confrontation." (Associated Press, Dec. 7)

Now this call by Biden has been upstaged by another development connecting sports with politics.

Peng Shuai is a 35-year-old Chinese

tennis player and former world doubles No. 1. She has won two major doubles titles — at Wimbledon in 2013 and the French Open in 2014 — and reached the semifinals at the 2014 U.S. Open in singles. She has earned 25 titles on tour.

In early November, the Associated Press, ESPN and other bourgeois news agencies reported that Ms. Peng had been sexually assaulted by a former Chinese government official, 75-year-old Zhang Gaoli. These same sources then claimed that Ms. Peng had gone missing, could not be found and blamed the Chinese government for her so-called disappearance.

On Nov. 21, Ms. Peng conducted a 30-minute video call with International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach, Athletes' Commission Chair Emma Terho and member Li Lingwei,



Peng Shuai

a former vice president of the Chinese Tennis Association, to say that she was well, spending time with her family and wanted her privacy to be respected.

@CGTN stated on Twitter: "Hello everyone, this is Peng Shuai. Regarding the recent news released on the official

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# U.S. and its Nazi puppets in Ukraine threaten war with Russia

The following slightly edited commentary was first published in November by Workers Voice Socialist Movement of New Orleans.

U.S. war hawks and their mouthpieces in the capitalist media claim that Russia is on the verge of invading Ukraine. This is another lie brought by the same people who falsely claimed that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, that Syria “gassed its own people” and so on. The U.S. would lie its way into WWIII before admitting that its wars are fought for one reason alone: to make rich men richer. Russia’s vast mineral, oil and gas wealth is what the U.S. is really after.

Is Russia a threat to U.S. workers? Last year Russia’s military budget was under \$62 billion. The official 2022 U.S. military budget is projected to be \$753 billion – 12 times the size of Russia’s. NATO’s joint annual military spending tops \$1 trillion and is on the rise.

The real threat to workers is that every social benefit we’ve fought for will be sacrificed to feed the war profiteers at the trough of the ever-ballooning war budget.

Here’s the truth: The U.S. has been on a steady march to push troops closer to Russia, despite assurances U.S./NATO forces would not move “one inch eastward,” in the words of U.S. Secretary of State James Baker in 1990. To raid resources, expand markets and exploit more workers, the U.S. and the European Union want Russia under their boot, just like they’ve got Ukraine, Poland and other countries of Eastern Europe. This would not only be a disaster for Russian workers; it would increase the capitalists’ power to crush the living standards of workers everywhere.

The capitalists “served and protected” by the U.S. military want complete and exclusive access to the land, resources and labor of the world. That’s why they’re so desperate to replace the independent governments of Russia, Belarus, China, Iran, Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela — all of which they demonize and all of which have been subjected to harsh U.S. economic sanctions, terrorist attacks and other forms of war.

## U.S. installs fascist government in Ukraine

While Big Business media has incessantly beat the drum for war with Russia, they bury the fact that in 2021 alone, the U.S. government pledged more than \$400 million in taxpayer dollars to build up the military power of the fascist government of Ukraine — which the Obama/Biden administration installed after a violent coup in 2014. The coup accomplished two main goals for the U.S.: Ukraine was forced to submit to the control of U.S. and EU banks; and it became a major buyer of U.S. weapons, which are now aimed at neighboring Russia.

The U.S.-backed government in Kiev relies on fascist terror to crush resistance to their policies of gutting social programs, destroying pensions, and privatization, resulting in mass unemployment and hunger throughout



**The funeral of 5-year-old Vladik Shikhov, killed by a Ukrainian military drone on April 3.**

Ukraine. Since 2014 the country has seen an explosion of terrorism against trade unionists and Roma, Jewish and LGBTQ people. Fascist gangs like the C14 patrol the streets of Kiev with the official sanction of the government. Living standards have declined to the point that 22.9% of Ukrainian children suffer from chronic malnutrition, according to the U.N.

## Anti-fascist fighters, families shelled by U.S. bombs

The people of Ukraine have resisted the attempted fascist takeover of their country. In the eastern part of Ukraine, in the Donbass region, anti-fascist fighters have waged a bitter war to defend the territories known as the Lugansk People’s Republic and the Donetsk People’s Republic. Since 2014 the Ukrainian war on the Donbass has killed nearly 14,000 people, including thousands of civilians.

In 2015 leaders from Ukraine, LPR, DPR and Russia met in Minsk, Belarus, to work out a diplomatic cessation of the war in the Donbass. They agreed to self-government and territorial independence for the Donbass. But in practice, the U.S.-backed Ukrainian government has done next to nothing to respect this agreement. Rarely does a day go by without some Ukrainian paramilitary unit committing an act of terrorism against the

## Ukraine U.S./NATO-backed fascist coup & a growing people's resistance

This Workers World pamphlet from 2014 explains the U.S./NATO role in helping neo-Nazis seize power in Ukraine, and the people's resistance to the new regime in Odessa, Donetsk, Lugansk and elsewhere.

Download free PDF from [workers.org/books](http://workers.org/books).



people of the LPR and DPR. Ukrainian forces recently captured and tortured a Russian cease-fire monitor in Lugansk and carried out an armed attack on a settlement of civilians in the demilitarized zone of the DPR.

In April, Ukraine’s President [Volodymyr] Zelensky dropped all pretense at diplomacy, when he declared that “NATO is the only way to end the war in Donbass.” Russia has made it clear that they would respond forcefully to any major escalation in the war as a matter of defense. It must be remembered that nearly 27 million Soviet citizens were killed in the war against the German Nazis. People of all nationalities in Russia do not want armed Ukrainian fascists menacing their country. They will respond to the threat by force if necessary.

## Biden's support of Ukrainian fascism

The hell that Ukrainians are living through is what the U.S. wants for Russia. Above all else, the ultrarich want governments that answer to the profit motives of banks and corporations. If for that purpose they feel they need to rally their shock troops under the swastika and rule by open terror, that’s what they’ll do. U.S.-backed Poland and Hungary have already taken this path.

U.S.-based fascist militias have been traveling to Ukraine to train with groups like the Azov battalion, which is a unit of the National Guard of Ukraine, funded by U.S. taxpayer dollars. Andriy Biletsky, commander of the Azov battalion and former member of the Ukrainian parliament, has stated: “The historic mission of our nation in this critical moment is to lead the white races of the world in a final crusade for their survival against subhumans.”

This is the ideology of the “white-power” movement that Kyle Rittenhouse, the Proud Boys and others are a part of. It’s imperative that U.S. workers of all nationalities show up en masse to oppose racism and fascism. The fascists can only be defeated in the streets through mass action, not through the capitalist, white-supremacist U.S. courts and not by relying on the Democratic Party which funds fascists in Israel, Ukraine and beyond. The fight must show solidarity with our class allies in Ukraine and Russia.

We must demand that the U.S. withdraw all support to the fascist government of Ukraine. We can’t expect to win the fight against fascism here, while it’s fueled by U.S. taxpayer dollars abroad.

The Biden administration is asking U.S. workers to side with the fascist government of Ukraine in a war to colonize Russia. We’ll have none of it. From Kenosha, Wisconsin, to Charlottesville, Virginia, to Brunswick, Georgia, we’ve lost too many of our own to racist and fascist violence here. It’s time we come together and show the world that we will not be ruled by fear.

## No to war with Russia!

**Workers unite to fight fascists here and in Ukraine!**

**No more blood for Wall Street profits!**

# The case of Peng Shuai and U.S. hypocrisy

Continued from page 10

website of the WTA, the content has not been confirmed or verified by myself and it was released without my consent. The news in that release, including the allegation of sexual assault, is not true. I’m not missing, nor am I unsafe. I’ve been resting at home and everything is fine. If the WTA publishes any more news about me, please verify it with me, and release it with my consent. As a professional tennis player, I thank you for all your companionship and consideration. I hope to promote Chinese tennis with you all if I have the chance in the future. I hope Chinese tennis will become better and better. Once again, thank you for your consideration.” (Nov. 17)

Strongly indicating that they were skeptical of the authenticity of Peng’s tweet, Steve Simon, the chairman and CEO of the World Tennis Association, along with its Board of Directors, indefinitely suspended all tennis matches in

China, including in Hong Kong, for the coming year.

Simon stated on [wtatennis.com](http://wtatennis.com), “The WTA has been clear on what is needed here, and we repeat our call for a full and transparent investigation — without censorship — into Peng Shuai’s sexual assault accusation.

“None of this is acceptable, nor can it become acceptable. If powerful people can suppress the voices of women and sweep allegations of sexual assault under the rug, then the basis on which the WTA was founded — equality for women — would suffer an immense setback. I will not and cannot let that happen to the WTA and its players.” (Dec. 1)

## Sheer hypocrisy can't be hidden

Any person who says that they have been sexually abused or assaulted should not be questioned and should always be taken seriously. But would any objective, thinking person ever believe that the WTA and the U.S. government could care about

a woman making an accusation of rape or sexual assault in China — or anywhere else in the world — except for an ulterior political motive to use the charge to benefit U.S. government machinations? And what about the previous U.S. president being a virulent misogynist as well as a white supremacist? U.S. society is riddled with all forms of systemic exploitation of women and woman-identified people, which the U.S. government allows and usually intensifies.

The U.S. imperialist government — and its apologists like the WTA or the IOC — will use any development to attack a country whose government asserts its independence from the U.S.

Pushing its oppressive agenda, including white supremacy, patriarchy and anti-communism, the U.S. will exploit any real issue of concern, including sexual abuse, in an attempt to isolate their biggest economic rival, China.

Think of how the hundreds of gymnasts must feel right now hearing how

the WTA, the IOC and others are falling all over themselves to defend Ms. Peng. These same entities allowed these U.S. athletes to endure many years of painful, humiliating sexual abuse at the hands of Dr. Larry Nassar, with the complicity of Michigan State University, USA Gymnastics and Olympic officials. These gymnasts, including the great Simone Biles, have placed the rightful blame on the FBI, USAG and others for lack of support, accountability and the gymnasts’ ongoing mental and physical issues.

The U.S. is the biggest human rights abuser amongst all the imperialist countries. Sexual abuse of all forms runs rampant in this country, along with other terrible crimes of capitalism — including police brutality, mass incarceration, the death penalty, LGBTQ2S oppression and much, much more.

The U.S. has no credibility and no right whatsoever when it points the finger of blame and tries to interfere in the internal affairs of another country. □



Vigilia por Berta Cáceres celebrada el 4 de abril de 2016 en Washington, D.C., frente al Banco Mundial.

## Honduras

# Victoria de Xiomara Castro y los grandes desafíos

Por Carlos Aznárez

Después de la victoria electoral por el Partido Libre y Xiomara Castro en las elecciones en Honduras en noviembre, el redactor de Resumen Latinoamericano escribió esta entrevista. He aquí algunos extractos.

### Quién es Xiomara Castro

Nos vamos a comunicar con Honduras para hablar de lo que ha sido este triunfo que con una muy holgada diferencia obtuvo Xiomara Castro. Xiomara viene trabajando por esta victoria desde hace mucho tiempo y ha sido una de las figuras fundamentales de la resistencia en Honduras desde que derrocaron con un golpe de Estado a su esposo Manuel Zelaya.

Ahora ha obtenido una victoria contra un candidato de derecha que es el actual alcalde de Tegucigalpa, Nasry Asfura.

Para hablar de todo esto, vamos a comunicarnos con Gilberto Ríos, integrante del Partido Libre y de ALBA Movimientos.

**Resumen Latinoamericano:** Gilberto, felicitaciones para ti y al pueblo hondureño por este triunfo.

**Gilberto Ríos:** Muy contento de su comunicación, saludo a todos los compañeros y compañeras de toda la lucha de América Latina. Decirles que estamos muy alegres por el triunfo de Xiomara, después de una batalla de 12 años. Ahora vienen nuevos desafíos de los que quiero que hablemos hoy, y de la situación en la que estamos recibiendo el país, que es bastante catastrófica. Pero sí, hay una gran alegría popular por el triunfo de Xiomara.

**RL:** Quisiera que hagas una síntesis, para aquellos que no la conocen, sobre quién es Xiomara Castro y cuál ha sido su lucha en estos 12 años.

**GR:** Xiomara fue la primera dama desde 2006, pero ella desistió del cargo como figura decorativa, y asumió la responsabilidad de la Red Solidaria. La red fue un proceso que se hizo en conjunto con la ONU y otras instituciones internacionales donde se focalizó la pobreza y la extrema pobreza en el país.

Había un mapa como de atención inmediata, en donde había fondos de transferencias condicionadas, es decir, ellos recibían una transferencia condicionada, que era básicamente un sistema de asistencia social muy efectiva. Logramos en ese gobierno la reducción de la pobreza, y la extrema pobreza, de manera significativa, sobre todo en el segundo y tercer año.

Las cifras macroeconómicas del presidente Manuel Zelaya son significativas y todos sus funcionarios fueron muy diligentes. Incluso, se inventó el método de depuración, pero el trabajo de Xiomara siempre tuvo una constante y fue un trabajo sacrificado, porque iba desde visitar comunidades, estar presente en ellas, atender los problemas de la gente.

Cuando comenzó ahora la campaña de Xiomara y le pidieron que enseñara algunas fotos de los trabajos de la red Solidaria, ella dijo: "yo nunca me tomé una foto entregando una ayuda a una familia, nunca consideré que eso iba a ser parte de mi labor política". Es decir, de todo el trabajo de Xiomara, que es conocido por



Xiomara Castro recibió más votos que ningún otro candidato en la historia de Honduras.

muchas mujeres y familias a nivel nacional, de los sectores más pobres, no se hizo propaganda de eso porque era un trabajo honesto, consistente en atender la necesidad de pobreza en el país.

Cuando se da el golpe de estado, ella se resguarda una semana en una embajada y enseguida sale y se incorpora al Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular. Era el Frente contra el golpe de estado, y desde allí acompañó las marchas, tragó gas lacrimógeno como todos nosotros, producto de la represión, y fue humillada por la policía nacional, por el ejército, al no permitirle el tránsito sobre el territorio nacional. A pesar de ello, mantuvo una posición de firmeza todo ese tiempo, era una líder popular entre las masas que se rebelaban todos los días en las calles.

Fue nuestra primera candidata, cuando creamos, un año y medio después del golpe, el Partido Libre y en un año ganamos las elecciones con Xiomara a la cabeza, la verdad fue extraordinario el trabajo que se hizo durante esa campaña y la cantidad de apoyo popular que recibimos.

Se impuso el fraude electoral en 2017, allí Xiomara también iba a ser candidata pero cedió su candidatura a Salvador Nasralla, para acercar incluso a los sectores de centroderecha a cambiar la situación de la dictadura. Se hizo un nuevo fraude, incluso más descomunal, sobre la alianza que había ganado por más de 10 puntos. Xiomara dijo que «si me lanzo no voy a ceder más», y a fin de cuentas un mes antes de terminar las elecciones se unieron todas las fuerzas de oposición del país, gracias a su liderazgo y tenacidad.

Es una mujer extraordinaria, ha sido presidenta de COPAL Mujeres, y administradora de los bienes de su familia. No es una persona improvisada, es una persona que estudió administración de empresas, es decir, tiene una capacidad grande. Conoce el Estado y conoce la necesidad del pueblo.

**RL:** También hay que destacar la lucha inquebrantable e inauditable del pueblo hondureño, porque se dice rápido pero aquí se han puesto muchos muertos, se puso mucha gente herida, torturadas, golpeada, encarcelada, periodistas asesinados...

**GR:** Sí, ha sido muy cruel, ha perseguido a los líderes de la oposición, ha exiliado a mucha gente, han habido asesinatos políticos entre los que se encuentran casos como el de Berta Cáceres, que es sumamente significativo en la lucha de nuestros pueblos indígenas en contra del extractivismo y

de todas las batallas eternas de los pueblos originarios, que siempre han sido marginados y atacados en Honduras. Tenemos desaparecidos de las comunidades garífunas en nuestro país que hace más de un año que fueron desaparecidos y las autoridades no publican ninguna investigación.

Tenemos gente mártir en 12 años, más de 89 comunicadores y periodistas asesinados a lo largo de 10 años.

La represión fue sumamente fuerte contra la comunicación y la libre expresión, contra casi todas las libertades. Hoy te pueden tocar de 6 a 8 años en la cárcel, por temas de oposición menores, hay una persecución permanente contra el magisterio organizado y otros gremios.

He dicho que una de las necesidades más importantes del gobierno de Xiomara es fortalecer el partido, en todo su estructura, para soportar el gobierno, pero también para soportar el movimiento social, el movimiento popular. Recuerdo que cuando íbamos a fundar el partido tuve una reunión privada con el comandante Daniel Ortega y nos dijo que era un paso correcto la fundación de un partido, que eso era muy positivo, pero que no descuidaremos la fuerza popular, el poder popular, porque en Honduras, a diferencia del resto de Centroamérica, los trabajadores habían ganado muchas de las conquistas de nuestro país, gracias a la sindicalización y gracias a la fuerza del movimiento popular.

En Honduras hay una tradición muy importante, con la huelga de 1954 sobre todo, de las huelgas de los trabajadores de las empresas bananeras, y de ahí salen muchas de las conquistas que hoy tenemos, o que teníamos, porque muchas las erradicó la dictadura en 12 años, como por ejemplo la ley del empleo por hora que simplemente niega toda forma de derecho laboral, de antigüedad, derechos sociales. Toda esa reflexión que ha habido entre la sindicalización y los sectores organizados no va a frenar al gobierno de Xiomara y eso también va a fortalecer a la larga la gestión del gobierno de reconciliación que vamos a formar.

**RL:** Hablabas de los desafíos, aquí me imagino que habrá mucho para depurar, tanto en la policía como las fuerzas militares porque han jugado un papel represor en todo este tiempo.

**GR:** Sí, están comprometidos con el tráfico de drogas, el crimen organizado y con otro tipo de delitos, pero son sectores de la policía y el ejército los que han mantenido mucha cercanía con el poder dentro de esas instituciones.

Nosotros tenemos información, porque hay mucha gente que apoya al Partido Libertad y Refundación también, a pesar de su espíritu de cuerpo no acompañan la locura a la que llegó este gobierno. Ha habido disidencias al interior del ejército e incluso tres golpes al interior de la policía a lo largo de estos 12 años. Son huelgas en las que se conocieron cosas muy serias. Entonces, esos cuerpos nos son

homogéneos, hay criterios dispares allí.

Recientemente tuve una comunicación con una compañera de la Universidad de Periodismo que le tocó hacer una nota de la escuela de los militares en el país, la Escuela de Defensa se llama, allí hay civiles tomando clases y haciendo cursos, y hubo un momento donde se decía que tuvieron que frenar la formación policial porque se habían formado muchos profesionales honestos que habían entrado en contradicción directamente con sus dirigentes y superiores, porque es muy clara la vinculación de la policía con el narcotráfico y el crimen organizado por ejemplo...

**RL:** Llamó la atención leer esta semana una comunicación del gobierno norteamericano diciendo que felicitaba a Xiomara. Digo esto, en función de cuánto ha pesado y pesa el gobierno norteamericano a través de su embajada en Honduras.

**GR:** Eso tiene dos explicaciones: la primera es el tema geopolítico, en qué situación se encuentra E.E.U.U. en este momento, manteniendo espacios a nivel internacional a nivel de la hegemonía comercial, etc. Lo que conocemos como la base capitalista norteamericana. Eso ha llevado a que haya una disputa en Centroamérica, y en parte con Latinoamérica, con las relaciones comerciales con China. Xiomara prometió relaciones con China, y eso hace que la embajada de E.E.U.U. reaccionara de manera diferente y creo que la gestión de Biden será diferente a la de Hilary o la de Trump, que soportaron bastante a este gobierno.

Creo que en parte tiene que ver también con que han priorizado en la Casa Blanca la migración, en sentido de que este es uno de los cinco temas más importantes de la Casa Blanca en la reelección de Biden. Y si no controlaba la estabilidad política en Centroamérica, simplemente se complicaban más los éxodos masivos a EE.UU. ...

**RL:** ¿Es imaginable que el gobierno de Xiomara vuelva a ser parte del ALBA-TCP?

**GR:** Ha sido una pregunta frecuente Carlos, y te quiero responder contundentemente: no ha habido elecciones en el resto de América Latina, o conflictos internos, o agresiones del imperialismo que el partido no haya denunciado oportunamente. Somos disciplinados con los trabajos de denuncia del Foro de San Pablo, el presidente Zelaya mantiene comunicaciones con todos los liderazgos latinoamericanos, mantiene todas las citas que le sean posibles a nivel internacional. Como coordinador de partido no ha delegado a nadie esa función, él personalmente ha sido beligerante en este tema internacional.

Muy contundente, siempre ha apoyado a la Revolución Cubana, a Nicaragua y Venezuela, no ha habido distanciamiento en ese sentido. Esperamos volver a todas las formas de integración latinoamericana posibles y crear otras más, completarlas o lo que sea, o alimentarlas, como decía el comandante Chávez, nos vamos a sumar, porque creemos en la necesidad de la integración. Eso está en el estatuto del partido también. □